

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ADP-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 CCO-00 INRE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 T-03 AID-20 RSR-01

IO-12 SIL-01 CU-04 NIC-01 A-01 M-03 OPR-02 OC-06

SCA-01 /157 W

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O P 201050 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 558

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

USIA WASHDC

USMISSION USUN

AMCONSUL CAN THO

CINCPAC

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CINCUSARPAC
CGFMFPAC
CGUSARSUPTHAI
CNO
COMNAVFORV
COMNAVINTCOM
COMSEVENTHFLT
COMUSMACTHAI
DIA WASHDC
COMUSMACV
7 AF
7/13 AF
7 TH PSYOPS
COMUSSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 2507

JOINT EMBASSY/ DOA

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, CB
SUBJECT: KHMER REPORT - MARCH 20, 1973

GENERAL

1. A STATE OF SIEGE WAS PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND SELECTED ARRESTS OF OPPOSITIONISTS AND MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY TOOK PLACE FOLLOWING THE BOMBING MARCH 17 OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE COMPOUND BY AN AIR FORCE T-28 PILOTED BY AN OFFICER WHO HAD BEEN LIVING WITH A DAUGHTER OF SIHANOUK. THIS EVENT, WHICH KILLED 43 PERSONS, FOLLOWED BY ONLY A COUPLE OF HOURS A HANDGRENADE ATTACK BY PLAIN- CLOTHES AGENTS OF THE PRESIDENT' S BROTHER LON NON ON A MEETING OF STRIKING TEACHERS AT WHICH TWO WERE KILLED AND EIGHT WOUNDED. ORIGINALLY ECONOMIC, THE STRIKERS' CRITICISMS HAD BEEN DIRECTED INCREASINGLY AGAINST LON NOL AND LON NON. THE ANTI- ROYALIST HUE OF THE GOVERNMENT' S COUNTERMEASURES SEEM DESTINED OR DESIGNED TO RAISE OBSTACLES TO THE EFFORTS TO MAKE FORMER PRINCE SISOWATH SIRIK MATAK VICE- PRESIDENT. GOVERNMENT FORCES MADE SOME PROGRESS IN RE- ESTABLISHING SECURITY ALONG BOTH BANKS OF THE MEKONG RIVER SOUTH OF NEAK LUONG. A MEKONG CONVOY, AFTER A SLIGHT DELAY, ARRIVED SAFELY AT PHNOM PENH ON MARCH 20. THE MILITARY SITUATION ON RTE 2
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NORTH OF TAKEO APPEARS TO HAVE STABILIZED ALTHOUGH THE INSURGENTS

CONTINUE TO APPLY PRESSURE AGAINST FANK POSITIONS SOUTH OF THAT CITY AND NORTH OF THE RVN BORDER. PHNOM PENH HAS REMAINED RELATIVELY CALM SINCE THE MARCH 17 BOMBING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE.

POLITICAL (INTERNAL)

2. IN THE LATE MORNING OF MARCH 17, THE EVE OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF SIHANOUK'S OVERTHROW, THREE REPORTED AGENTS OF BRIGADIER GENERAL LON NOL ENTERED A MEETING OF STRIKING TEACHERS IN THE FACULTY OF PEDAGOGY, HELD IN VIOLATION OF A GOVERNMENT ORDER AGAINST DEMONSTRATIONS ISSUED MARCH 15, AND ASSAILED ONE OF THE SPEAKERS WHO WERE DENOUNCING THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT. THE INTRUDERS WERE LOCKED IN A ROOM BY OTHERS PRESENT, BUT AN ESTIMATED FIFTY OTHER PLAINCLOTHESMEN WHO HAD BEEN WAITING OUTSIDE REPORTEDLY FORCED THEIR WAY IN, THROWING HAND- GRENADES, KILLING TWO PERSONS AND WOUNDING EIGHT OTHERS, WHILE THE GENDARMERIE NATIONALE STOOD BY IN APPARENT COMPLICITY.

3. AT 1320 HOURS AN AIR FORCE T-28 FULLY ARMED AND FUELED, WAS HIJACKED BY A WASHED- OUT PILOT, SO PHOTRA, AND DROPPED THREE BOMBS ON THE COMPOUND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE. THE EXPLOSIONS AND RESULTING FIRE KILLED 43 PERSONS AND WOUNDED 28 AT LATEST COUNT. THE CRAFT THEN HEADED AWAY INTO INSURGENT- HELD TERRITORY, WHERE THERE ARE MANY AIRSTRIPS, AND HAS NOT BEEN FOUND. SO PHOTRA HAD BEEN LIVING FOR MANY MONTHS WITH THE ALREADY MARRIED DAUGHTER OF SIHANOUK, PRINCESS BOTUM BOPHA, WHO IS PREGNANT BY HIM.

4. PRESIDENT LON NOL PROCLAIMED A STATE OF SIEGE AND SECURITY FORCES FORTHWITH ARRESTED SIXTEEN MEMBERS
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INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ADP-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

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IO-12 SIL-01 CU-04 NIC-01 A-01 M-03 OPR-02 OC-06

SCA-01 /157 W
----- 099323

O P 201050 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 559
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
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CINCUSARPAC
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COMUSMACTHAI
DIA WASHDC
COMUSMACV
7 AF
7/13 AF
7 TH PSYOPS
COMUSSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 2507

5. BY ACCIDENT OR DESIGN THE GOVERNMENT' S ESCALATION INTO A
" ROYALIST PLOT" OF SO PHOTRA' S ATTACK AND AMOROUS CONNECTION

WITH ONE OF THE MANY SIHANOUK DAUGHTERS IN TOWN TARS LT. GENERAL AND FORMER PRICE SIRIK MATAK WITH THE SAME BRUSH, LON NON HAVING ALREADY DENOUNCED HIM TO A FOREIGN JOURNALIST AS SURROUNDED BY TRAITORS AND ASPIRING TO RESTORE THE MONARCHY. THE QUESTION OF NAMING SIRIK MATAK VICE- PRESIDENT, RAISED BY LON NOL IN JANUARY, MUST NOW BE ADJOURNED INDEFINITELY.

6. THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ISSUED A STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR MARSHAL LON NOL, BUT SPECIFIED APPROVAL OF THE GOVERNMENT' S ACTIONS WAS STRICKEN FROM THE DRAFT. UNDER ARTICLE 39 OF THE CONSTITUTION THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MUST APPROVE THE STATE OF SIEGE WITHIN SEVEN DAYS OF ITS PROCLAMATION, I. E., BY MARCH 24.

7. PRIOR TO THE DRAMATICS OF THE WEEKEND MARSHAL LON NOL ON MARCH 14 INSTRUCTED GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS TO STUDY THE POSSIBILITY OF HOLDING NEW LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN AN EFFORT TO REUNITE ALL KHMERS, INCLUDING THE INSURGENTS. A CLARIFICATION BY THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WAS CONTEMPLATED THAT THESE ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD ONLY AFTER FIGHTING HAD ENDED, THOUGH A FORMAL, WRITTEN CEASE- FIRE WAS NOT A PRIOR CONDITION, AND THAT THEY MUST BE SUPERVISED BY THE ICC. HE SAID INSURGENTS COULD VOTE, BUT WAS EVASIVE ON WHETHER THEY COULD PRESENT THEMSELVES AS CANDIDATES AND ON OTHER CRUCIAL
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DETAILS. HE DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE CABINET TO INCLUDE INSURGENT MINISTERS WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

POLITICAL (EXTERNAL)

8. GKR FOREIGN MINISTER LONG BORET RETURNED TO PHNOM PENH FROM A VISIT TO SEVERAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND JORDAN. RELATIONS HAVE NOW BEEN FORMALLY ESTABLISHED WITH IVORY COAST AND ZAIRE AND PROPOSALS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WITH UPPER VOLTA, GHANA, MALAWI, AND JORDAN ARE PENDING. LIBERIA IS STILL EXAMINING THE QUESTION AND KENYA HAS STATED THAT IT CANNOT CONSIDER ESTABLISHING RELATIONS UNTIL A CEASE- FIRE IS ACHIEVED IN CAMBODIA. THE GKR IS ATTEMPTING TO ARRANGE VISITS TO OTHER AFRICAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES BUT HAS NOT YET RECEIVED ANY CONFIRMATIONS.

GRUNK/ FUNK

9. SIHANOUK' S EXACT WHEREABOUTS STILL REMAIN UNCLEAR AFTER A MONTH OF SILENCE ON THE SUBJECT.

ECONOMIC

10. THE CABINET HAS TAKEN A DECISION TO PROHIBIT THE IMPORTATION

OF ALL PASSENGER CARS; BEER, WINE, CHAMPAGNE, AND SPIRITS; LUXURY FOODS; FRUITS (APPLES AND PEARS ARE PROMINENT IMPORTS FROM TAIWAN); COSMETICS; AND JEWELRY. THE GKR HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHEN TO PUT THIS DECISION INTO EFFECT, AND THE TIMING IS PROBABLY LINKED TO THE RESOLUTION OF THE TEACHERS' STRIKE.

11. AS OF MARCH 19, 1973, THERE WAS APPROXIMATELY A 70- DAY SUPPLY OF RICE AVAILABLE IN PHNOM PENH AND KOMPONG SOM.

MILITARY

12. DESPITE CONTINUED KHMER INSURGENT HARASSMENT, GOVERNMENT TROOPS SUPPORTED BY NAVAL AND AIR POWER, SUCCEEDED IN CLEARING ENEMY FROM POSITIONS SOME 15 KM ALONG BOTH SIDES OF THE MEKONG RIVER SOUTH OF NEAK LUONG. SECURITY ALONG THE LOWER PORTIONS OF THE RIVER IN CAMBODIA HAS BEEN POOR; HOWEVER, THE SAFE ARRIVAL OF THE CONVOY ON MARCH 20 INDICATES SOME IMPROVEMENT. A LARGE NUMBER OF ENEMY REMAIN ALONG THE RIVER AND FURTHER ATTEMPTS
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COULD BE MADE TO CLOSE THE CORRIDOR OR TO HARASS RIVERINE TRAFFIC.

13. THE MILITARY SITUATION ON RTE 2 NORTH OF TAKEO IMPROVED. THE SEVENTH DIVISION RECAPTURED TWO JAMOR POSITIONS WHICH HAD FALLEN EARLIER AND LINKED UP WITH PREVIOUSLY ISOLATED FANK ELEMENTS SOUTH OF CHAMBAK. ONLY TWO SMALL SEGMENTS OF THE HIGHWAY REMAIN TO BE CLEARED AND MAJOR ENEMY RESISTANCE IS NOT ANTICIPATED IN FACE OF NUMERICALLY SUPERIOR FANK FORCES NOW COMMITTED TO THE OPERATION. GOVERNMENT POSITIONS ON RTE 2 SOUTH OF TAKEO ARE REPEATEDLY SUBJECTED TO STANDOFF ATTACKS AND THE SITUATION THERE REMAINS SERIOUS. NEAR TAKEO, ENEMY FORCES CUT SURFACE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THAT TOWN AND ANG TASOM; HOWEVER, NO ATTEMPTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO SERIOUSLY HARASS EITHER POSITION.

14. THE STATE OF EMERGENCY DECLARED BY MARSHAL LON NOL ON MARCH 17 REMAINS IN EFFECT AND THE CITY' S SECURITY FORCES ARE ON MAXIMUM ALERT. REINFORCED SECURITY PATROLS AND ROAD BLOCKS HAVE BEEN INSTALLED IN THE CAPITAL AND THE SITUATION HAS CALMED CONSIDERABLY IN THE WAKE OF THE BOMBING AND STUDENT- TEACHER DEMONSTRATIONS. THE INSURGENTS LIGHTLY SHELLLED TAKHMAU, A SUBURB OF PHNOM PENH, WHICH WAS THE ONLY INCIDENT MARKING THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF SIHANOUK' S OUSTER.

15. ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY COMBAT ACTIVITY REMAINED AT A LOW LEVEL. RTE 4 AND 5 ARE OPEN TO CONVOY AND CIVILIAN TRAFFIC AND COMMERCIAL DC-3' S CONTINUE TO OPERATE IN AND OUT OF KG THOM AIRFIELD.

SWANK

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PHNOM02507
Document Source: CORE
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: PHNOM PENH
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Review Comment: n/a
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Review Exemptions: n/a
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30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 971215
Subject: KHMER REPORT - MARCH 20, 1973 GENERAL
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, CB
To: EA
SECSTATE WASHDC INFO BANGKOK
CANBERRA
COPENHAGEN
MULTIPLE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

